

guarded for centuries with jealous suspicion should have been passed and practised without audible murmur.

We reviewed and confirmed the decisions made three days earlier, but modified the proposals in regard to prices for commandeered produce in the direction of greater elasticity.

Altogether it was a startling series of decisions to be taken by a Revolution Government in which there were every half-hour great landowners : restriction of rent by

law—doubling the wages of the agricultural labourer—compulsory cultivation of land (even of parks !)—power for tenants to kill pheasants

which ravaged their crops. While the discussion was going on and the decisions were being taken.

Lord Balfour sat in quizzical silence. At last he looked at the clock and said : " As nearly as I can reckon, we have had one revolution every half-hour ! "

It remained to secure parliamentary sanction for our policy. I gave a preliminary description of it in the course of an extensive statement to the House of Commons on 23rd February, 1917, about the position of food and shipping. Urging the importance of home food production, I said :—

" Twenty years after the Corn Laws were abolished in this country we produced twice as much wheat as we imported. . * . Since then four or five million acres of arable land have been converted into pasture, and

about half
announced the agricultural population—
the agricultural
to the cultural labouring population
— has
Commons emigrated abroad or into
the towns.
No doubt the State showed a
lamentable indifference
to the importance of the
agricultural